



AMENDED DECISION NOTICE
to the Montana Outdoor Discovery Center Improvement Project

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
State Parks, North Central Region
July 2014

Background

In June 2010, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) completed an environmental assessment (EA) to improve the facilities at the Montana Outdoor Discovery Center adjacent to Spring Meadow State Park in Helena. The improvements originally considered included a youth archery/airgun range, children's discovery area, vault latrine, group use shelter, and a fishing/aquatic education dock.

Public comments were solicited for the proposed improvements, which generated two written comments and one person attending the public meeting. All three individuals were generally supportive of the plans to enhance the Center's educational facilities, but concerns were raised regarding ongoing restoration of the native vegetation, gun educational classes and public safety, and use of airguns at the location.

Based on the analysis completed in the EA and the public comments, MFWP decided to proceed with all the proposed improvements with the exception of the use of airguns at the shooting range. Limiting the use to only archery activities would minimize the potential for conflict and preclude the risk of even minor soil contamination from lead projectiles and address concerns about potential conflict between archery and other activities at Spring Meadow Lake State Park.

Proposed Amended Decision

MFWP proposes to enclose the existing outdoor archery range by expanding the current archery educational building to accommodate an indoor airgun shooting range area. The existing archery building would be expanded southward to the current boundary of the archery target area. The expanded building would be of the same construction as the educational building with metal-sided walls and possibly concrete flooring.

Airgun educational classes and use of the range would be limited to groups or individuals under the direct supervision and control of an FWP-approved shooting instructor. This level of supervision is identical to the rules governing the use of the range for archery activities.

Need for an Amended Decision

As acknowledged in the 2010 Decision Notice for the Montana Outdoor Discovery Center Improvement Project EA, hunter education is an important and valued program offered by MFWP and required by law for all youth and adults born after 1985 to obtain a hunting license. Proper, safe and respectful use of firearms is an essential part of MFWP's hunter education curriculum.

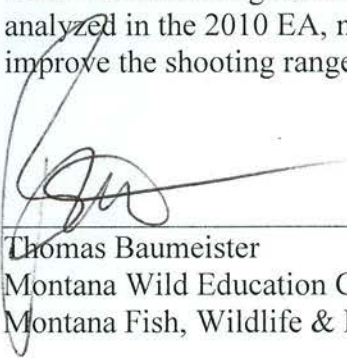
Currently, the Center hosts six hunter educational classes annually with 35-40 students in each class. The addition of an airgun target range at the Center would enhance and expand the educational experience for students and would provide Helena students a similar learning experience that is offered at other MFWP hunter educational classes throughout the state.

The archery educational classes would continue to be scheduled at the indoor range in addition to the new hunter educational classes. Since the establishment of the archery range, MFWP has hosted 5-6 archery instructional classes and seven adult field day classes annually. Averages of forty students have attended each type of archery class.

By enclosing the airgun range, and following the NRA's recommendations for indoor airgun ranges, environmental concerns about lead pellets and public safety raised during the original comment period would be addressed since all pellets would be shot in the indoor range into an approved pellet trap, an FWP-approved shooting instructor would be present at all times, and the noise of the airguns would not disturb visitors of Spring Meadow State Park.

Decision

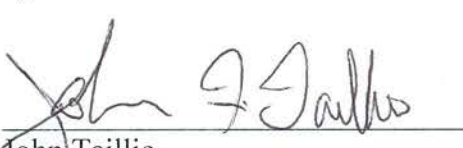
Since the use of airguns at the existing range was identified and its potential impacts were analyzed in the 2010 EA, no additional environmental review is necessary. The plans to improve the shooting range building can be initiated.



Thomas Baumeister
Montana Wild Education Center Supervisor
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Date

7/18/2014



John Taillie
Montana State Parks R4 Regional Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Date

7/14/14